UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/52/281
14 August 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-second session
Item 108 of the provisional agenda*

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The General Assembly, by its resolution 51/69 of 12 December 1996, requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-second session and thereafter annually, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in the most integrated and effective way. The present report describes measures taken and the progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action by the entities of the United Nations system since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/51/322). It also describes factors related to the capacity of the United Nations system in terms of human and financial requirements.

* A/52/150 and Corr.1.

97-21942 (E) 030997

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 51/69 of 12 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-second session and thereafter annually, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way, including human and financial requirements and measures taken and the progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration[1] and the Platform for Action.[2]

2. The Secretary-General, in his previous report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322, para. 2), noted the understanding of the Secretariat that the reports to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly on the subject, requested by the Assembly in its resolution 50/203 of 22 December 1995, would be provided on a rolling basis: in each of his reports, the Secretary-General, while briefly summarizing results from previous sessions of the other bodies, would add new material. Therefore, three separate reports are submitted in the course of a year to the three bodies under the broader heading of follow-up to the Beijing Conference and mainstreaming a gender perspective.

3. An effort is made in each of the three reports to provide information that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body in order to facilitate intergovernmental decision-making. Thus, the reports to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasize efforts undertaken by the secretariat of the Commission in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective and other follow-up activities, the emphasis of the reports to the Economic and Social Council is on facilitating the coordination function of the Council and the reports to the General Assembly contain information from all entities in the United Nations system, including information from specialized agencies and international financial institutions, as well as an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level and by non-governmental organizations and civil society. Each report contains a section on means of implementation at all levels, including human and resource needs.

4. The present report provides an update of developments that have taken place in these areas since the submission to the General Assembly of the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/51/322) in 1996.

II. PROGRESS IN MAINSTREAMING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

5. In the period under review, the activities aimed at the implementation of the Platform for Action at the international level focused on two areas: (a) mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system; and (b) efforts to enhance the capacity of the Organization and the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

A. Results of the coordination segment of the 1997 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council devoted to the theme "Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system"

6. In accordance with its decision 1996/310 of 13 November 1996, the Council discussed the issue of gender mainstreaming during the coordination segment of its 1997 substantive session. The report of the Secretary-General (E/1997/66) had been prepared in cooperation with entities of the United Nations system, in particular the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality.

7. During a panel discussion of senior United Nations officials[3] moderated by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, examples of cooperation and coordination in gender mainstreaming in areas such as accountability, best practices and lessons learned were presented and policy and experiences at the policy and country levels were highlighted. A total of 33 Member States, 9 United Nations entities, 1 intergovernmental organization and 1 non-governmental organization participated in the debate.[4]

8. Agreed conclusions 1997/1,[5] adopted by the Economic and Social Council, provide a definition and principles of gender mainstreaming (paras. 4-10). With regard to intergovernmental processes, the recommendations of the Council are addressed to the General Assembly, to the Council itself and its subsidiary bodies, including the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as to funds, programmes and regional commissions (paras. 12-18). At the institutional level, requirements for gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes are spelled out, and recommendations are put forward concerning (a) the role of gender units and focal points in gender mainstreaming, (b) capacity-building for gender mainstreaming and (c) gender mainstreaming in the integrated follow-up to United Nations conferences (paras. 21-44).

9. The General Assembly is encouraged to direct all of its committees and bodies and draw the attention of other bodies of the United Nations system to the need to mainstream a gender perspective systematically into all areas of their work, in particular in areas such as macroeconomic questions, operational activities for development, poverty eradication, human rights, humanitarian assistance, budgeting, disarmament, peace and security, and legal and political matters (para. 12). All bodies dealing with programme and budgetary matters, including the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), are called upon to ensure in their work that all programmes visibly mainstream a gender perspective (para. 13). The Secretariat is requested to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation (para. 19). The Secretary-General is encouraged to demand accountability from senior managers to realize gender mainstreaming (para. 21). The agreed conclusions underline that the gender perspective should be systematically integrated in the ongoing reform process in the United Nations system, including in the work of the executive committees (para. 22).

10. The Council underlined the importance of monitoring gender mainstreaming in its decision to review annually the activities of its functional commissions and subsidiary bodies in this regard (para. 20).

11. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has advised all members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) of the adoption by the Council of the agreed conclusions. Steps are being taken to bring them to the attention of all senior officials of the United Nations system. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has been the first to take specific follow-up steps to strengthen gender mainstreaming in all its sectoral areas and in terms of programming and planning. Gender capacity in the Office of the Executive Secretary has been reinforced, and focal points are being designated in all divisions of ECE to provide advice and support on gender mainstreaming.

12. Further action, such as follow-up by ACC and its endorsement of a set of gender mainstreaming principles submitted to it by the Inter-Agency Committee, the possible issuance of administrative instructions on gender mainstreaming and on the completion of programme budgets from the gender perspective, is under consideration.

13. The report of the Secretary-General (E/1997/66) and the recommendations of the Council for action on the agreed conclusions are primarily concerned with efforts at the intergovernmental and institutional levels. At the same time, Governments committed themselves in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action to reflect a gender perspective in all their policies and programmes. The efforts at the international level supplement governmental efforts at gender mainstreaming in national policies and programmes.

14. Increased attention should, therefore, be paid to supporting and monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies at the national level. A number of efforts are already under way. For example, the workshop of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the Expert Group on Women in Development (WID) of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development to be held in September will assess collaboration and partnerships for gender mainstreaming and, in particular, the donor/country interface. A preliminary analysis of national action plans received by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat provides some indication of the extent to which gender mainstreaming is actively pursued as a part of the follow-up to the Beijing Conference at the national level, and the report to be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women in 1998 will provide a basis for further recommendations. Progress in gender mainstreaming at the national level could be at the core of the discussion in 1999 by the Commission of critical area of concern IV.H (institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women).[2] The comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action, to be initiated in 1999, will provide an opportunity for an integrated assessment of gender mainstreaming and, in particular, of the linkages between the national level (Governments) and the international level (intergovernmental bodies and entities of the United Nations system).

15. The General Assembly may wish to take action, in accordance with the recommendation of the Council, directing all its committees and bodies to mainstream a gender perspective in their work and drawing the attention of other bodies of the United Nations system to this requirement.

B. Follow-up in the United Nations system

16. The secretariats of organizations and other entities of the United Nations system have continued to take steps to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action within their respective mandates since the previous report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/51/322) was submitted to the General Assembly.

17. In his report to the Economic and Social Council (E/1997/64), the Secretary-General reported on the results of the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women and other functional commissions of the Council, as well as activities by the regional commissions. The report also reflected the outcome of the second session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, which continued its efforts in support of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. The second session was held in New York on 5 and 6 March 1997.

18. Information on efforts by entities of the United Nations system that are particularly relevant to implementing the Platform for Action is presented below. It is based on the contributions requested by the Division for the Advancement of Women, which focused on additional action taken by the relevant entities in support of the implementation of the Platform for Action since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/51/322) and on means of implementation, including new human resources, financial means and structural changes.

19. The present report does not include information on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which are reflected in the reports submitted to the General Assembly by each of those entities.

1. Population Division

20. During the period under consideration and in the context of the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development held at Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994, the Population Division of the Secretariat carried out research on the topic of male/female differences in infant and child mortality. The 1996 revision of the report Too Young to Die: Genes or Gender[6] provides an update on gender-specific population estimates and projections.

2. Department of Public Information

21. The Department of Public Information of the Secretariat printed and distributed copies of the Platform for Action and organized, jointly with the Division for the Advancement of Women, panel discussions on its implementation. To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Department, in cooperation with the Division, organized an exhibit and published brochures. The Department also organized jointly with the

Division a discussion on women at the peace table on the occasion of International Women's Day.

3. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements

22. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) focused on incorporating the gender perspective into the design and implementation of the Habitat Agenda (A/CONF.165/14, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II), adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul from 3 to 14 June 1996. In order to achieve that, the Centre worked in close cooperation with the Huairou Commission on Women and Habitat and other women's organizations. The Habitat Agenda includes such issues as gender equality, women's rights to land, property, resources and women in decision-making. To ensure gender-sensitive implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Centre assists its partners in the field (non-governmental organizations and individual women at the grass-roots level) by linking their activities to its monitoring work and supporting national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

4. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

23. A trust fund project of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on follow-up to the implementation of major global conferences financed by the Government of the Netherlands includes a component on follow-up to the Platform for Action. The resources are being utilized for undertaking activities aimed at enhancing the participation of women entrepreneurs in the economies of least developed countries.

5. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

24. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) focused on promoting the human rights of refugee women by addressing the issue in all programmes and stressing the need of asylum on the basis of gender-based persecution. Furthermore, it launched special initiatives to integrate refugee women from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Rwanda into the mainstreaming of economic rehabilitation through, inter alia, skills training and legal assistance. Another development programme for refugee women in the period 1996-1997 addressed the need for mainstreaming refugee women's problems and the gender perspective in peace-building activities.

6. United Nations Children's Fund

25. Within the framework of the implementation of the Platform for Action at the national level, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided assistance in the design of gender-sensitive policies and the preparation of national action plans. At the regional level, UNICEF, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, organized various meetings to discuss the follow-up to the regional plans of action.

26. Furthermore, UNICEF carried out a number of activities targeting girls and women, such as designing a regional strategy to address female genital mutilation in eastern Africa and launching a regional project in south Asia in order to combat domestic violence against women and girls. Several innovative projects address the needs and rights of adolescent girls.

7. United Nations Population Fund

27. At the country level, a major goal of programmes funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is to ensure universal access by both women and men to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, and to advance the status of women and girls. Programme funding support is provided to Governments, often in partnership with non-governmental organizations, especially women's organizations and youth groups.

28. Several major initiatives have been undertaken recently; for example, UNFPA organized, in 1996, jointly with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights, the round table of human rights treaty bodies on human rights approaches to women's health, with a focus on reproductive and sexual health and rights. UNFPA is also in the process of assessing the extent to which gender issues and perspectives are being mainstreamed within its funded programmes in 12 countries. As part of this process, a draft conceptual framework and preliminary indicators on gender mainstreaming have been formulated.

8. United Nations University

29. The United Nations University has carried out policy-oriented studies and projects on new technologies and their impact on women workers. The projects assess the potential of telework for creating employment and career opportunities for women and explore the impact of information-intensive modes of production on women's employment in the region of Asia and the Pacific.

9. World Food Programme

30. The Commitments to Women of the World Food Programme (WFP) address women's equal access to food, education and income-earning opportunities. The progress report on the implementation of the Commitments to Women, submitted to the Executive Board of WFP in March 1997, contains information on (a) specific strategies to reach the most disadvantaged, particularly women, (b) women's involvement at the local level and (c) indicators for tracking women's use of the benefits of food-for-work activities.

31. All memoranda of understanding between WFP and its implementing partners now emphasize that the specific needs of women have to be taken into account, that women are to be involved in the management of food aid and that reports should reflect the share of benefits received by women and review the positions held by women in managing food aid.

10. International Labour Organization

32. As part of the follow-up to the Beijing Conference, the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched in 1997 the International Programme on More and Better Jobs for Women. A number of countries have been selected for the implementation of the Programme, which has been designed to improve the quantity and quality of women's employment in the context of globalization.

33. While strengthening its mainstreaming strategy, ILO will organize a meeting on women in management and a workshop on gender and labour administration in the second half of 1997.

11. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

34. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued to implement three priority areas identified by the 1995 FAO Conference: gender mainstreaming within the organization, providing assistance to Member States in gender mainstreaming and increasing the representation of professional women within the organization. Each division has developed a specific programme of action and has assumed responsibility for its implementation. FAO also developed sex-disaggregated statistics and information on rural populations. The information is disseminated via its site on the World Wide Web and through various workshops.

12. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

35. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) continued its activities to implement the six resolutions that outline its work on gender issues. The resolutions refer to stereotyping of women, women and the media, women's contribution to a culture of peace, the status of women, sexist wording in UNESCO basic texts and the 12 critical areas of concern as they relate to the mandate of UNESCO.

36. Field officers working on gender issues have strengthened their network by using the Internet. Specific strategies were elaborated to support women in the field of science and technology.

13. World Health Organization

37. During the reporting period, the World Health Organization (WHO) organized, in collaboration with UNESCO, a round table on health and education, focusing on school environment, nutrition and empowerment of women.

38. WHO was active in the field of training. A training course on gender and reproductive health was designed for health services in developing countries. Furthermore, WHO launched a project to sensitize health workers to the specific needs of abused women.

39. WHO published studies on issues related to women and health, including the following: domestic violence; women, health and environment; women at work; gender and care; and women with disabilities. It also launched a plan to prevent female genital mutilation in Africa and reviewed activities that had taken place in that regard.

14. The World Bank

40. The World Bank intends to integrate a gender perspective in all its programmes, country assistance strategies and projects. Therefore, gender has been systematically addressed in issues regarding education, population, health, nutrition and rural development. Furthermore, the World Bank intends to give more attention to gender in sectors such as transport and energy.

41. In order to disseminate information about its activities regarding gender, the World Bank set up a home page on gender on its internal web. The home page will be placed on the external web by 1 September 1997. Also, in June 1997, the World Bank published the second annual progress report on the implementation of its gender policies.

42. The World Bank enhanced its collaboration with civil society by convening the second annual meeting with its External Gender Consultative Group. The Group, comprised of 14 leading gender specialists from different regions and sectors of civil society, gathered to give feedback on the gender-related policies and programmes of the World Bank.

15. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

43. To support the implementation of the Platform for Action, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has initiated and pursued the implementation of a programme to promote women entrepreneurs in six African countries. On the policy level, UNIDO assists the Government of Colombia in increasing the participation of women in the manufacturing sector.

III. NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

44. In its resolution 1996/6, section III, of 26 July 1996, the Economic and Social Council decided that voluntary submission by Governments of national information, for example national action plans or national reports, on the implementation of the Platform for Action, should be encouraged. In its resolution 51/69, the General Assembly urged Governments that had not yet done so to undertake efforts to develop comprehensive implementation strategies or plans of action, including time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring, in order to implement fully the Platform for Action.

45. In order to prepare a synthesized report on the implementation of the Platform for Action, based, inter alia, on national action plans and any other sources of information already available in the United Nations system, for the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, in 1998, the

Secretary-General sent to Member States, a second note verbale dated 17 June 1997, inviting them to submit national implementation strategies or information on the status of their preparation. The deadline for submission was extended to 31 July 1997.

46. In an effort to assist Member States in the preparation of national action plans, the report of the Subregional Conference of Senior Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Platform for Action in Central and Eastern Europe, held at Bucharest from 12 to 14 September 1996, was translated into all official languages of the United Nations and made available to Member States. The report contains the outline of a model national action plan.

47. As at 5 August 1997, the Secretariat received 54 national action plans and priority plans. Some of the plans had been prepared with the assistance of non-governmental organizations, which had helped the Governments to collect information on the needs of women or had actually participated in drafting the plans. Many non-governmental organizations had also prepared their own national action plans.

48. A preliminary analysis of the received national action plans indicates that many Member States have developed action plans focusing on a select number of critical areas of concern that constitute their national priorities. The critical areas most frequently addressed by Governments have been education and training of women, women and health and women in the economy. Less frequently selected have been areas such as women and the media, women and the environment, the girl child, and women in armed conflict. While some of the national action plans are very detailed and action-oriented, many do not go beyond declarations of intent in the area of policy-making.

49. The synthesized report will examine the critical areas that Governments emphasize, the ways in which Governments translate into strategic action their commitment to the implementation of the Platform for Action. It will focus on the elements identified in the Platform for Action (para. 297) that are essential to the establishment of the national strategy, such as consultations with relevant institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as persons at the highest level of authority in government and in civil society. The report will also provide information on time-bound targets, benchmarks and mechanisms for monitoring, as well as proposals for allocating or reallocating resources for implementation. Emphasis is also being put on identification of national and regional priorities and on institutional arrangements that may strengthen the implementation of the Platform for Action. The report will also address the capacity for mainstreaming gender concerns at the national level.

50. Within each critical area of concern, the types of action proposed are being analysed to determine, inter alia, whether they introduce policies and programmes, legislative or administrative measures, set benchmarks, propose institutional arrangements, allocate resources, or pay attention to special groups.

51. To date, 26 national action plans have been placed on the World Wide Web (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/list.htm) and are thus accessible to a large audience.

IV. REPORTED ACTIVITIES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

52. At the international, regional and national levels, non-governmental organizations continued to take part in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference. Their activities have not been reported systematically to the Secretariat, but those that have been brought to the attention of the Division for the Advancement of Women since the previous report on the subject was submitted to the General Assembly are noted here as examples of the widespread follow-up to the Conference by civil society.

53. To commemorate the first anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, various non-governmental organizations held meetings, workshops and exhibitions. For example, in Thailand, a regional forum entitled "Looking beyond Beijing" was organized by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development and a two-day event was organized by the Thai Women Watch to commemorate the Beijing Conference. Other countries in which non-governmental organizations held special events to commemorate the Beijing Conference include Israel, Nigeria and the United States of America.

54. The NGO Forum on Women issued a book containing speeches from its plenary meetings at the Conference, entitled Look at the World through Women's Eyes. Also, the November 1996 issue of Network News: a Newsletter of the Global Link for Midlife and Older Women carried special articles to commemorate the Beijing Conference. Through the efforts of non-governmental organizations several booklets summarizing the Platform for Action and/or highlighting issues of particular concern in specific countries have been published. For example, in Vanuatu, such a booklet was published in English and Bislama as a result of a collaborative project of the Government of Vanuatu, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and various women's groups. In Kenya, a simplified version of the Platform for Action was published. Shirkat Gah, a women's group in Pakistan, published a simplified version of it in Urdu.

55. There are numerous ongoing efforts by non-governmental organizations to monitor progress in implementing the Platform for Action. The Women's Environment and Development Organization has published two progress reports on action taken by Governments during the first year after the Beijing Conference, entitled "Beyond promises: Governments in motion - one year after the Beijing women's conference" and "Promise kept, promise broken? A survey of Governments on national action plans to implement the Beijing Platform". The International Women's Tribune Centre has continued to actively share monitoring information through its Faxnet. Non-governmental organizations continued to organize meetings and workshops in various countries, including Argentina, Croatia, Ecuador, Egypt, Kenya, Thailand, Uganda and Uruguay, to monitor the implementation process at the national and regional levels. The newsletters of many non-governmental organizations have also been carrying regular articles on activities carried out as part of the follow-up to the Conference. For example, a newsletter issued by the Geneva NGO Subcommittee on the Status of Women with the Non-Governmental Organization/ECE working group on women disseminated information on initiatives undertaken by European women's groups as follow-up to the Beijing Conference.

56. Supported by decisions of the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women, representatives of non-governmental organizations participated at the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 1997. They served as experts on panels and made interventions during dialogues. They also took part in consultations between non-governmental organizations and Member States which were facilitated by the Division for the Advancement of Women and which addressed those critical areas of concern under consideration by the Commission at its forty-first session. Funding was made available for a small number of representatives of non-governmental organizations from the least developed countries to attend the forty-first session. Selections were made based on knowledge and experience in the area of concern under consideration by the Commission.

57. Women's non-governmental organizations participated actively at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, held from 23 to 27 June 1997 to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21. They called for the mainstreaming of gender in all sectors of implementation and for greater coherence with the results of the Fourth World Conference on Women in related areas. At the seventeenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, held in New York from 7 to 25 July 1997, informal consultations were held with non-governmental organizations on country reports, a practice which the Committee decided to continue in future. The Committee also invited non-governmental organizations to an informal meeting to initiate the preparation of a general recommendation on article 12 of the Convention, on women and health. Non-governmental organizations having expertise in that critical area of concern made statements suggesting issues and approaches to be addressed by the Committee in its general recommendation, including points from the Platform for Action. The Committee agreed to continue to consult non-governmental organizations in preparing its general recommendations.

58. Women's organizations also played an active role in the Conference on Governance for Sustainable Development and Equity, held in New York from 28 to 30 July 1997.

V. MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION, INCLUDING HUMAN RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MEANS AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES

59. The General Assembly, in its resolution 51/69, requested the Secretary-General to report on ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in the most integrated and effective way, including human and financial requirements.

A. Gender-sensitive programming and budgeting

60. There is a growing interest in strengthening accountability for follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to gender mainstreaming through accountability for resources allocated to this task. To that end, a number of new efforts are under way to determine with greater clarity how programme and project resources benefit women and men respectively as a result of gender

mainstreaming, both nationally and internationally, and to design budgeting processes in a way that would a priori account for gender factors. In parallel to gender-sensitive budgeting in all areas, resources allocated specifically for implementation of the Platform for Action, both nationally and internationally, may be an indicator as to how various actors participate in the implementation of the Platform for Action.

61. Attention to a gender-sensitive use of resources is reflected in agreed conclusions 1997/1, on gender mainstreaming,[5] where the importance of adequate and, if need be, additional human and financial resources for gender mainstreaming from all available funding sources is noted (para. 10). The Council also emphasized the need for gender mainstreaming in programme and budgetary matters when calling on, inter alia, CPC and the governing bodies of funds and programmes to ensure that medium-term plans and programme budgets implement gender mainstreaming (paras. 13-14).

62. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality highlighted the issue of gender-sensitive budgeting in drawing the attention of ACC to the need for assessing programme budgets and budget codes in order to determine what resources go into gender mainstreaming. The Committee established a working group to conduct an assessment of the issues that would need to be addressed in that regard. Efforts undertaken by other institutions and entities, including Governments, and the Commonwealth Secretariat, will be reviewed, and their advice sought, as appropriate.

63. In the United Nations system, ILO has allocated additional resources for gender training.

64. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has committed approximately 15 per cent of its Special Voluntary Fund for 1997 to gender mainstreaming within the framework of the Platform for Action. Through a cost-sharing arrangement with a number of donor countries, a programme has been jointly prepared with the United Nations Development Programme and UNIFEM to assign 20 UNV gender-in-development specialists to country offices to facilitate the work of the resident coordinators in system-wide follow-up to the Platform for Action, including the work on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.

65. Although women's projects and programmes of UNIDO are financed nearly exclusively from extrabudgetary resources, and no additional human resources are available, structural changes and new management approaches foster more intensified and productive teamwork throughout that organization.

B. Developments with regard to strengthening capacity for gender mainstreaming

66. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has recently decided to establish a gender unit. The unit will be responsible for the continuous monitoring and evaluation of all the policies, programmes, projects and activities of the Centre from a gender perspective and for building up gender competence among staff in the Centre and in the field.

67. Substantive elements concerning the gender dimension in the work of UNCTAD are being identified. A workshop on selected trade, development and gender aspects is under preparation to assist in identifying ways and means of promoting the mainstreaming of gender dimension in UNCTAD programmes and policies.

68. In an effort to mainstream gender issues within the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), an informal gender working group was established in January 1995 under the guidance of the Focal Point on Women for UNDCP. The membership of the working group has gradually expanded since then. It now includes all three divisions of the UNDCP, with representatives from the relevant technical, operational and administrative sections. In addition, there are field office members in the UNDCP regional offices in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The members of the working group rotate in chairing the monthly meetings. The 1997 work plan for the working group includes drafting guidelines on integrating gender issues in UNDCP programmatic activities and in field projects.

69. In order to ensure the integration of key aspects of the Platform for Action into country programming and translating provisions into concrete action at UNHCR, a reference group on refugee women has been set up. The group is chaired by the Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees.

70. At ILO, training activities in gender issues in the world of work have been carried out at headquarters and in the field for ILO staff and constituent members. Plans have been made and will be implemented in 1997 to incorporate gender aspects into management training courses for all ILO staff. Two new senior specialist posts on women and gender, based in regions, have been created. And, an additional post has been established at ILO headquarters in the Office of the Special Adviser on Women Workers' Questions.

71. In order to mainstream gender, FAO upgraded the capacity of its staff by providing gender training workshops.

72. At UNESCO, a new unit for the promotion of the status of women and gender equality has been established by the Director-General. It comprises the overall coordination and the specific programmes on women and a culture of peace and on women in the Mediterranean. This new structure has led to a more articulated and concerted collaboration with the focal points of the sectors, the programme specialists responsible for projects, field offices, national commissions, major intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other partners. In addition, staff in the UNESCO secretariat and in the field will receive training on gender issues before the end of 1997.

73. At the World Bank, gender analysis and policy activities have been strategically linked to economic policy work, as gender was established as one of the four families in the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM) Network. Responsibility for the implementation of gender policies has been more closely linked to regional management, and the participation of women's organizations at the grass-roots level has been strengthened through the recruitment of non-governmental organization coordinators in most resident missions.

C. Initiatives to increase the proportion of women in Professional posts

74. Agreed conclusions 1997/1[5] state that gender balance is another central goal in gender mainstreaming (para. 36). It is recommended that the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women should be regularly provided with statistics on the number and percentage of women at all levels throughout the whole United Nations system; moreover, the ACC Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions and the International Civil Service Commission should monitor progress in staffing policies aimed at achieving gender balance.

75. The report of the Secretary-General on the status of women in the Secretariat, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, will provide an overview of progress in achieving the goal of gender balance in the Secretariat. Based on the recommendation of the Council, the Assembly may wish to decide that, in future, comprehensive statistical information should be provided on the level and percentage of women system-wide.

76. The present report provides some examples of changes in the number of Professional women in the United Nations system in the period under review.

77. In her statement made at the coordination segment of the 1997 substantive session of the Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees noted that, following the Beijing Conference, significant progress had been achieved but the results were still far from satisfactory. The proportion of Professional female staff in UNHCR was 38.7 per cent and women regional coordinators had been deployed in the field.

78. UNV has focused on achieving gender balance within its own staff by recruiting and promoting qualified women. Approximately 50 per cent of the UNV programme officers in the country offices are women. Efforts are being undertaken to reach that figure for the percentage of women among all UNV specialists and field workers.

79. The Executive Director of WFP highlighted substantial increases in the number of female staff at all levels since 1992. In particular, women had accounted for 18.9 per cent of staff at the P-5 level and above in December 1996, compared with 9.2 per cent in 1992. The overall recruitment of female staff had increased from 12 per cent of total recruiting in 1994 to 39 per cent in 1996. In 1992, there had been no women at a level higher than P-5. In December 1996, female staff had been at the D-1 (24.4 per cent), the D-2 (25 per cent), and the ASG/USG (33 per cent) levels. Project staff numbers in country offices had the lowest levels of gender balance, 20 per cent, and would receive increased attention in the years ahead.

80. In order to increase the representation of women at the Professional level, FAO developed strategies to identify suitable female candidates and established a roster of international experts working in the area of women in development to be considered for future vacancies.

81. At UNESCO, the percentage of Professional women has increased from 30.03 per cent in 1990 to 37.12 per cent in 1997. UNESCO has designed special strategies to identify and attract women candidates for posts at the Professional level.

82. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has focused on enhancing the status of Professional women within that organization. In order to support the representation of women in Professional posts, ICAO has set concrete targets and launched activities to identify suitable female candidates. However, that strategy has not produced the desired results. Applications received from female candidates have been mainly for administrative and language posts, which constitute a small percentage of the posts in the Professional and higher categories. Budgetary constraints resulting in the freezing of about 12 per cent of the positions in ICAO, have also adversely affected recruitment programmes.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

83. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322) was submitted to the General Assembly, significant progress has been made in terms of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, and in terms of mainstreaming a gender perspective, by the three-tiered intergovernmental mechanisms and the Secretariat and other entities of the United Nations system. The adoption by the Economic and Social Council of agreed conclusions 1997/1, on gender mainstreaming, stands out as the most comprehensive intergovernmental action to date on gender mainstreaming. It constitutes a firm basis from which to proceed expeditiously with concrete steps to achieve measurable progress in gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all areas. The Assembly may wish to take action on the recommendations submitted to it by the Council in the agreed conclusions.

84. A number of specific opportunities for further strengthening follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and on gender mainstreaming can already be identified. The consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women of a synthesized report on national action plans in 1998 will provide a comprehensive assessment with regard to action at the national level and a stepping stone for the initiation of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action, scheduled for 1999. The mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan on the advancement of women, 1996-2001, by the Commission and the Council in 1998 should accomplish the same purpose with regard to action within the United Nations system.

85. A broader assessment of and recommendations for further action with regard to gender mainstreaming at the national level remain to be made. These might be accomplished on a priority basis during the consideration of critical area of concern IV.H institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women[2] by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1999.

86. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1997/61 of 25 July 1997, on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major United

Nations conferences and summits, reaffirmed that system-wide gender mainstreaming must form an integral part in the implementation of decisions of recent United Nations conferences and summits. The Council is planning to hold a session in 1998, immediately following its organizational session, to further consider integrated conference follow-up; the planned session should provide an opportunity to build upon the agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming and to proceed with their systematic reflection in any future integrated conference follow-up by intergovernmental bodies, including efforts to enhance the dialogue between the Council, its subsidiary bodies and the funds and programmes and organizations of the United Nations system.

Notes

[1] Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid., annex II.

[3] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund and Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Organization.

[4] The following Member States participated in the debate: Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada (on behalf also of Australia and New Zealand), Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Kenya, Luxembourg (on behalf of the European Union), Namibia, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Republic of Tanzania (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China) and United States of America.

The following United Nations entities participated in the debate: United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Development Fund for Women, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization and World Bank.

The International Organization for Immigration and the American Association of Retired Persons also participated in the debate.

[5] To be issued in the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/52/3).

[6] ESA/P/WP.126.